

Today and Tomorrow • • By Walter Lippmann

Mr. Rusk Abroad *8/16/66*

DURING JUNE, Secretary Rusk has been to Europe and to Australia looking after our alliances. In the case of NATO he was confronted with the fact that Europe today has outlived the NATO of some twenty years ago and is ready for, in fact is demanding, great changes in the purposes, the plans, and the objectives of the alliances. In the case of SEATO, the alliance in southeast Asia, the dominant fact is that the United States is fighting a very considerable war with no help from Pakistan and France, with only token help from the British members and the Philippines, and with the growing involvement of Thailand.

While NATO and SEATO are very different, one thing is common to them. While both are defensive alliances against a communist great power, either or both of them would be a catastrophic failure if they did not prevent a great war. The prevention of a great war can only be accomplished by a thaw in the cold war, and eventual conciliation, such as has been under way in Europe since the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and is now proceeding

under the powerful impulse given to it by General de Gaulle.

ASKING ourselves how a similar thaw might become possible in the Far East, we should, I think, note two controlling elements as we have seen them in our European experience. One is that there exists in Europe an overall strategic balance of power established by the mutual nuclear deterrence of the USSR and the U.S.A. The other is that Europe, not only Gaullist Europe—Europe from Britain to Rumania—has begun to take charge of its own destiny, and is moving towards a conclusion of the cold war.

In the Far East, on the other hand, a strategic balance of power has not yet been reached. For while the United States has virtually absolute nuclear superiority over China, the effectiveness of this superiority is neutralized by the Soviet-Chinese alliance, which is presumably alive. In this state of nuclear neutralization, the manpower of China available for guerrilla fighting is a potent and unsettling factor.

Furthermore, as compared with the situation which has developed in Europe in the past four or five years, there is as yet no important Asian power capable of taking the lead, as has Gaullist France, in breaking up the pattern of the cold war. In this respect the most hopeful de-

velopment in Asia for a long time is the emergence of Japan as a power as we saw in the recent Asian conference in Korea. Although nothing was entirely clear or very definite, it was apparent that in emerging as a great power in Asia, Japan will assume a role, not unlike that of Gaullist France towards the Soviet Union, of mediator with Red China.

IN THE WHOLE vast process of change in Europe and the Far East, Secretary Rusk has chosen to identify the United States with non-belief in the changes. He has abandoned the initiative in opening ways to the future and seems so concerned with the risks of change, which of course exist, that how patly he has been able to stand has become the measure of his diplomatic success.

The moral assurance which envelopes the American stand-pattism is impressive. Never a word of doubt is offered in official quarters. Now steadfastness is a virtue, though rigidity is not; perseverance is a virtue, though stubbornness is not; reliability is a virtue, though stand-pattism is not. Unchangeability and lack of fickleness is a virtue, but it would be better if the State Department of the United States did not act as if it had not had a new idea since the death of John F. Kennedy.

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